

The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club Welcomes 19 Inductees

The Villages Daily Sun
Tuesday, January 26, 2016
By Cody Hills

The checkered flag waved for 19 individuals as they made their way into The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club's Hall of Fame on Saturday night at La Hacienda Recreation Center.

More than 110 tickets were distributed for the event, in which club members chucked their recognizable yellow club polo shirts for their business-casual best, sitting amongst tables draped in checkered flag tablecloths.

The gala opened with several door prizes and a catered lasagna dinner by Chefs of Napoli III.

The main feature of the evening was a presentation by Congressman Bill Posey, U.S. Representative for Florida's 8th Congressional District, who spoke to the group for approximately 20 minutes.

Posey is a former racer, track owner and operator, and is still an avid racing enthusiast who is very familiar with the local club and their outreach here in The Villages.

"I know a lot of the people the club has inducted before," Posey said. "And I've seen this club at a lot of different races before with their shirts on and these are hardcore, knowledgeable race fans. It's just a pleasure to be in their presence."

The congressman discussed his early career in racing, which he described as "brutally underwhelming," which drew a roar of laughter from the crowd.

Posey went full-time into the racing business following his release from the NASA Apollo rocket program, in which he worked upwards of 60 hours per week during the most universal race known to man – the race to the moon. He soon thereafter founded The National Racetrack Clearinghouse, purchasing race tracks in 35 states across the country.

Following legendary NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt's death in the 2001 Daytona 500, Posey became instrumental in passing into law the Earnhardt Family Protection Act. The law deems that Florida's medical examination autopsy photographs, video and audio recordings – which were matters of public record at the time – are exempt from public inspection without the written consent from the next of kin.



Cody Hills | Daily Sun
Congressman Bill Posey speaks during The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club's 2016 Hall of Fame Induction and Awards Night on Saturday at La Hacienda Recreation Center.

The love of racing has followed Posey throughout his political journey and remains a constant source of focus in his everyday life.

"There's so many things about racing that just reflect back to reality," he said. "Some days you can't do anything wrong and some days you can't do anything right. Like all the rest of life, sometimes you win and sometimes you crash."

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Eddie Roche
Jack Hewitt
Merle Bettenhausen
Paul Vitrano
Jim Chadwick
Charles Poindexter
Dave Dion
David Rogers
Mike Brewer
Kenny Brewer
Chuck Kidwell
Ford Easton
Larry Moore
Art "Fireball" Fehrman
Jim O'Connor
Pat Brack
Kim Garcia
Cheryl Brewer
Lisa LaJole

Villages Motor Racing Fan Club President Jerry Conkle was delighted to have the governmental dignitary on hand for the event, and celebrated the racing works of Posey with an honorary place in their Hall of Fame.

"Congressman Posey is a great race fan," Conkle said. "He heard of our group and contacted us, and then we met with him over at New Smyrna (Speedway) back in November. So we wanted to invite him tonight and honor what he's done for the sport of racing."

The club meets monthly in The Villages, with the purpose of attracting those interested in racing of all sorts. The group will celebrate its 10th anniversary season in 2016, complete with a new club logo and special events planned throughout the year. The club also sponsors a scholarship and donates to several local charities annually.

The group's Hall of Fame now features 124 total members, including those inducted in the ninth class of glorified individuals on Saturday evening.

The club also awarded Darren Ivey as winner of the club's "Prediction Row" contest, a weekly feature in The Villages Daily Sun, predicting the NASCAR Sprint Cup race each week.

This year's recipient of the Glen Carter Crew Chief Award, recognizing outstanding efforts of a member toward the club, was shared by club membership coordinators Bob and Camille Sherman.

Being included in the fraternity of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club Hall of Fame meant a great deal to each of the inductees in attendance, but it might've been former NASCAR driver Dave Dion who summed up the inclusion best.

"When you have a club like this one in The Villages," Dion said, "– one that helps keep the passion of racing alive and commemorates those who have given their whole lives to racing – that's a big deal. It's really appreciated by those inducted here tonight."